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in: Ahalosniper, Cursed Ones, Monsters, Sentient

Bluebeard



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"Some forms of terror are fresher than others. The more intense the fear, the more the emotions die. Terror, in its truest sense, is a dynamic state, not a static one. It is the moment when hope turns to despair."

—The Bluebeard of Novigrad

Thanks to the permeation of ambient [magic](#) throughout the world, the intense experience of emotion by humans and other sentient species has the power to resonate in the physical world under the wrong circumstances, often with unintended consequences. These accidental rituals can include the creation of [wraiths](#) when violent or traumatic death occurs, or [cursing](#) anything from a trinket to a nation with enough enmity behind a hateful remark. The extreme confluences of energy these events create is

BLUEBEARD



Taxonomy

Classification Cursed One

Physiology

Eyes Blue

Other Bulging eyes, dark blue hair and facial hair.

Ecology

Lifespan Unknown, possibly indefinite

Intelligence Sentient

Habitat Human or non-human settlements, most commonly secluded towns or villages; infrequently cities.

not always unnoticed or wasted either; [succubi](#) sustain themselves on the energy of lust, while [hyms](#) feed on the pain of guilt. The **Bluebeard**, however, must gorge itself on the ripest fear.

<i>Diet</i>	Fear essence
<i>Prey</i>	Sentient species

Marked by their bulging eyes and the dark blue tinge to the hair of their scalps and faces, the curse of the Bluebeard has solely been known to effect men of nobility or otherwise in positions of power. Once afflicted, food will be nourishing as ash to them and the flavor of all drink soured. Only by extracting the essence of a sentient creature stricken with abject fear can the Bluebeard rejuvenate itself, and to obtain this feeling will delve unflinchingly into the darkest and most depraved of experiments, relishing the subtleties between fears drawn of each new source.

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Curse

As Bluebeards have always been exceptionally rare and even more difficult to kill, few accounts of hunts and not a single autopsy report exist to provide evidence for how a Bluebeard is created. These creatures have also always remained in the privileged positions to benefit from the advancement of civilization, leading some notable witchers and naturalist scholars to speculate they may have a hand in destroying such documentation themselves. Hearsay and speculation provide many theories for their origins: the accumulated ill wishes of the peasantry toward a capricious lord providing the foundation of a curse, willing transformation by rituals kept secret by cabals within the nobility, or even a humanoid species of cursed changelings murdering and replacing members of noble families. Whatever the case, the few verified accounts penned by witchers who've fought such monsters attest to the effectiveness of [cursed oils](#), proving their existence is somehow tied to transformative magic. To date, no known case exists of a Bluebeard's curse being broken.

Physiology

Once afflicted, the recipient of the Bluebeard's curse changes little compared to a [werewolf](#) or other [therianthrope](#), but still ceases to be entirely human. Stories of Bluebeards describe them as exceedingly ugly, always mentioning their bulging eyes, swelled to twice or more their normal size; this would be enough to push the eyes from their sockets, with only morphed skin and eyelids keeping them in place. The second key trait is their nominal hair: regardless of its color before, the afflicted's head and facial hair will turn a dark blue. While Bluebeards have been said to pass off this color for naturally black hair in previous centuries, today their stories are widespread enough to recognize on sight, and as such Bluebeards have taken to dying their hair or shaving it entirely. Apart from these features, the Bluebeard will retain much the appearance and mannerisms of an adult human male.

Abilities

Though no known host to the Bluebeard's curse possessed skill in magic prior to their

transformation, the realized Bluebeard has an apparently instinctual ability to cast a limited selection of spells. These include a number of basic offensive hexes and defensive wards, but more significant are the rituals they use in the creation of their lair, as described below. These include such powerful effects as persistent magical fields, control of flora and fauna in the same vein as [leshens](#), and extraction of the essence of fear from sentient beings. A few radical alchemists have postulated the seemingly endless wealth Bluebeards expend in their lifetimes is evidence of their long-sought holy grail of alchemy, that being the transmutation of other materials to gold. However, though Bluebeard lairs have been investigated after their tenants' deaths on multiple occasions, no mage has reported success in duplicating the rituals they seem to be capable of with the same ritual components.

Alchemical Applications

Peasant superstition holds that Bluebeard hair is a magnet for ill fortune and an ingredient in the potions for the [Trial of the Grasses](#) used to mutate witchers. While the demise of the witcher schools means the truth of the latter claim may never be proven, something of a corollary might lend evidence to the former. Trials by a number of mages have found amulets containing Bluebeard hair may drive off more benevolent spirits and beasts such as godlings or sylvans. As their hair's color changes, some element of the Bluebeard's curse must reside within their hair and remain even after their demise to be sensed by such creatures.

Behaviors

Lairing

Shortly after their curse takes hold, the Bluebeard will seek to isolate themselves from family. In fortunate cases, the recipient is an elder lord with little family to speak of in the first place, or an eldest son who can claim an appointment to rule over an estate held by the family. At worst, however, murders will follow, either staged as accidents or pinned on the most convenient scapegoat—other family members, often. If the curse has not taken the family's head, attempts on their life are certain until the curse bearer is installed as their patriarch. Sometimes before this has even been accomplished, they will begin constructing their inner sanctum.

The Bluebeard will choose a room, preferably underground, to renovate as their new bed chamber, though if no cellar or basement is available they will select from those near the center of their home. In addition to expensive trappings such as furniture and drapes, they will install large hooks on the chamber walls. Once this is done, the settled owner of the estate will begin to reduce their servant staff, allowing any grounds surrounding it to fall into disrepair. Gardens will grow weeds, dust will cloud windows, and the many rooms of the modest mansions Bluebeards roost in will lay dark and cold save the essential facilities. Of the servants who are retained, sometimes as few as two, all will begin to show disinterest in anything outside their master's bidding, and display unquestioning obedience to his will.

If such a manor is in secluded countryside, their grounds will be walled off with mazes of blue-green juniper, grown in where none previously existed. These hedges are capable of moving, and will be filled with mist at night which disorients and clouds the memory of those who inhale it. Would-be attackers lost in this maze may spend days wandering it before eating the juniper berries to avoid starvation—and quickly die of their poisons, without ever a chance of reaching their foe. Once this barrier has grown, the Bluebeard's work can begin.

Predation

If the Bluebeard had a wife or betrothed living with him, they will become his first victim. But if not, the Bluebeard will seek a human woman to marry, often spending exorbitant amounts of gold from unexplained means to throw lavish banquets for his subjects to seek one out. This rare generosity and their kind demeanor will often see them find a fiancé quickly, despite the horrid appearance their transformation inflicts on them. Once living within his manor, the couple will sleep apart, the Bluebeard in his chamber and the woman

in one reserved for her, all needs seen to by the servant staff. The Bluebeard will also bestow a gift upon his bride: a magical key able to open any door in the house. At the same time, however, he will forbid them from using it to enter his chamber. The bride's agreement completes this apparent ritual, sealing their own curse.

When curiosity inevitably overcomes their apprehension, the woman will be accosted and locked inside the room by the Bluebeard and his servants. Her monstrous husband then subjects the victim to both magical and mundane tortures aimed not at causing them pain, but rather inciting fear; these are known to include being menaced with threats of and actual physical harm, but also terrible nightmares no doubt magically inflicted. Kept on their body as a necklace, their key becomes a siphon for this fear, the essence of which appears as a milk-white liquid in a crystal vessel kept in the room with them. This fear essence is what feeds the Bluebeard, a fact its victims surely learn to more of their own horror.

After an uncertain threshold, the bride will finally die upon draining the last of their fear, and the Bluebeard hangs their body upon the wall hooks within the chamber. Publicly mourning their beloved's death or lamenting they have fled, the Bluebeard will eventually seek a new spouse to make his own.

Slaying

"A Bluebeard's a terrible husband, but an excellent neighbor."

—A witcher's proverb about Bluebeards.

Due to assuming such a powerful place in society, a Bluebeard is as difficult to find as they are to kill. Their wealth is generously shared, which in impoverished regions can make the peasantry their ally even when their nature is known. Ealdormen may direct their villages to act as spies for their monstrous lord, sending a runner to alert the Bluebeard if a witcher or similar likely enemy arrives in town. In some cases, the peasants may even take up arms in its defense, murdering or driving out the threat. Thanks to this loyalty, word of a Bluebeard is slower to spread, and few clients can be found who will pay to post a worthy reward for it. Usually, a contract is funded when the relative of someone with means or enough desperation becomes the object of the Bluebeard's affections. Though a Bluebeard is usually selective about its targets, it will become obsessive once a potential bride catches its eye, and the women of noble courts who can afford to spend coin and time on appearances are the most fetching. Most stories about Bluebeards, fact or fictitious, begin when a lord or wealthy knight seeks a witcher to help them rescue a sister or cousin abducted by the monster.

Even when such an occasion arises, assaulting a Bluebeard's manor is no mean feat. The hedge maze surrounding its home is near-certain death to enter, as the Bluebeard will immediately sense an intruder upon it and begin to reshape it at whim. Many brave souls seeking to rescue a loved one have entered only to populate its shifting rows with moldy skeletons and rusted swords. Some Bluebeards enjoy forcing their brides to watch from a high window as their loved ones succumb to this doom in hopes of their rescue. The most practical means of breaching this first line of defense is fire; while small fires such as the [lgni](#) sign cause it to recoil, the plants swiftly recover and shift new foliage in to block an open path. Large-scale burns fueled with cut timber are most effective, but take time; victims any attacker seeks to rescue will die by the time such a burn breaks through, and some Bluebeards have been known to flee their lairs if a serious threat like a mob or renowned witcher are behind the attack. A few elder witchers recall colleagues who'd discovered a secret method of navigating a Bluebeard's maze, but none of these colleagues—or their records of hunts—survive today.

Once through the maze, a rescuer has yet to contend with the defenses of the manor itself. Any gates or battlements predating the Bluebeard's existence will still be in place and shuttered tightly, but only the few staff it has retained will be present to defend the house. These will give their lives in service of their master, however, and are often under curses cast by the Bluebeard to enhance their usefulness, some of which can prove dangerous. If the Bluebeard deigns, however, the intruder might be cordially invited within, and their needs tended to by the servants who would just as readily kill them. Whether led or fighting

their way to it, the Bluebeard will only confront their guest when they reach the central chamber. Surrounded by the bodies of its victims and the stench of death, a would-be slayer must overcome the Bluebeard's magic and often other talents; a Bluebeard confronted by the witcher Jacob was an avid fencer, for example. In these final contests, however, Bluebeards prove as susceptible to silver swords and cursed oil as any other monster.

Known Bluebeards

- The Bluebeard of Novigrad

A seldom-spoken chapter of Novigrad's history is how much it owes its growth shortly after the First Landing to a Bluebeard. One such being took up residence in the fledgling city and spent prodigious wealth of unknown origin to expand its limits and take a long series of wives. The creature was only discovered when political sharks on the city's council wished to acquire the grounds around his manor to create more city housing, and after uncovering his secret were only too happy to call for the followers of the Eternal Fire to declare him a monster and burn him at the stake.

- Baelor Guildenstern

A distinguished member of the Aedirnian nobility by all appearances, this well-shaven Bluebeard was undone by his last wife in 1173. Lady Rayla Guildenstern had apparently either learned of her husband's nature or simply never developed an interest in his private room, content to spend his gold and help Vengerberg flourish while Lord Baelor's health—without the nourishment of a victim—declined. After forty years of marriage, Lady Rayla revealed her husband to the Aedirnian court, whose soldiers had the weakened Bluebeard dragged from his house and hung by the neck until dead. Lady Rayla would inherit his land and titles, upon which she lived comfortably to the end of her days.

Trivia

This article was inspired by two derivations of the French folktale of [Bluebeard](#): the first was Gilles de Rais, the basis for the folktale, appearing as the Caster-class Servant in *Fate/Zero*; the second was the Bluebeard as a species which imbibes fear from Cornelia Funke's *Mirrorworld* series.

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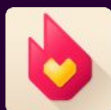
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